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ABSTRACT

Both parents have unique contributions to make in the development of a child. Mothers and fathers think and act differently from one another, and children thrive on these differences. This book examines gender differences in child rearing, focusing on the conflict between male experts' advice promoting early independence and women's desire for intimacy with their children. Chapter 1, "The Mother Parenting versus Father Parenting Conflict," maintains that men's tendency to be self-focused and seek independence and women's tendency to be other-focused and seek connectedness are manifested in child rearing practices. Chapter 2, "Understanding Basic Gender Differences," examines the consequences of male/female differences in independence versus interdependence, competition versus cooperation, communication for information exchange versus intimacy, viewing child rearing as finding solutions versus giving support, and concern about being respected versus being liked. Chapter 3, "Understanding Basic Parenting Differences," discusses gender differences in parents' views about breast feeding, crying, holding, weaning, sleeping arrangements, and enforced child separation from parents. Chapter 4, "Reading the Experts," traces the historical development of the child rearing expert and examines contemporary differences in child rearing advice by men and women experts. Chapter 5, "The Importance of the Nurturing Mother," discusses children's need to establish a trusting relationship with another, examines how that relationship is developed with nurturing mothers, and argues that independence in children is enforced prematurely. Chapter 6, "The Importance of the Encouraging Father," discusses fathers' role in the development of children's independence. It is concluded that both approaches to parenting are valuable and that coordination of the approaches occurs best when both parents are involved in child rearing. Contains 133 references. (KDFB)